

Settlement Workers in the Honolulu Slums

H. M. AYRES

It is said that one-half of the world doesn't know how the other half lives. Equally true might it be said that the other half not only doesn't know, but also doesn't care.

Where one owns a house and can afford some of the luxuries as well as the necessities of life, the year rolls along pleasantly enough in Honolulu. Tenement life here, however, is surrounded by all the sorrow, hardship, misery and sin which mark it in every city of size the wide world over.

Palama is Honolulu's tenement district, and in hundreds of cubby-holes of stuffy, ill-smelling rooms above the noisy street a thousand children are being dragged up in an atmosphere reeking with filth and immorality, by parents who long ago were forced by stress of circumstances to the lamentable conclusion that life is hardly worth the candle.

In these tenement rooms all sorts and conditions and nationalities of men, women and children make their homes. There may be found the native stevedore, with his wife and brown babies, living cheek by jowl with a Japanese daughter of the town. There may be seen a flaxen-haired couple, children of the Little Father, sharing the floor with a Chinese opium-smoker and a bleary-eyed American benevolent. And in and out of the rooms at all hours of the day and night run and play a score of children belonging to other dwellers in that particular tenement.

In summer the air of the tenements is unbearable for grownup persons, let alone the babies, who constantly come, and who, thanks to their unhealthy en-

vironment, almost as constantly go. Slopers are dumped indiscriminately around and under the houses, particularly by the orientals, who know little and care less about the laws of sanitation, and the stench resulting makes one wonder why Honolulu doesn't have an epidemic more frequently than she does.

Many of the tenement dwellers are victims of hard circumstances and are there because they are too poor to reside anywhere else. They keep their poor rooms clean and tidy, and generally have a fern or potted plant or two to remind them of the garden they once owned, or, maybe, one day hope to own when their fortunes mend. A great many more, however, have sunk so low in the social scale that they don't care where they live or sleep. Victims of drink or drugs, they drag out their besotted lives in the tenements—lives punctuated by occasional periods spent in jail—and round them live, sleep and play the children!

It is in the tenements that the real tragedy of life is written. There the unamed babies see the light, and there the erring mother views life stripped of its glamor, music and light—pale and sordid—while in the street below the world of "don't know and don't care" moves along in its own selfish way.

The friendless, the forlorn and the deserted seek refuge in the tenement; likewise the criminal and the licker from justice. They come and go of many different ways, and the story of many of them no man may know.

On a dirty lanai a mat lies an old native woman, with running sores on her feet. She is afraid to go to a doctor, not so much on account of her being poor as because she is afraid that she

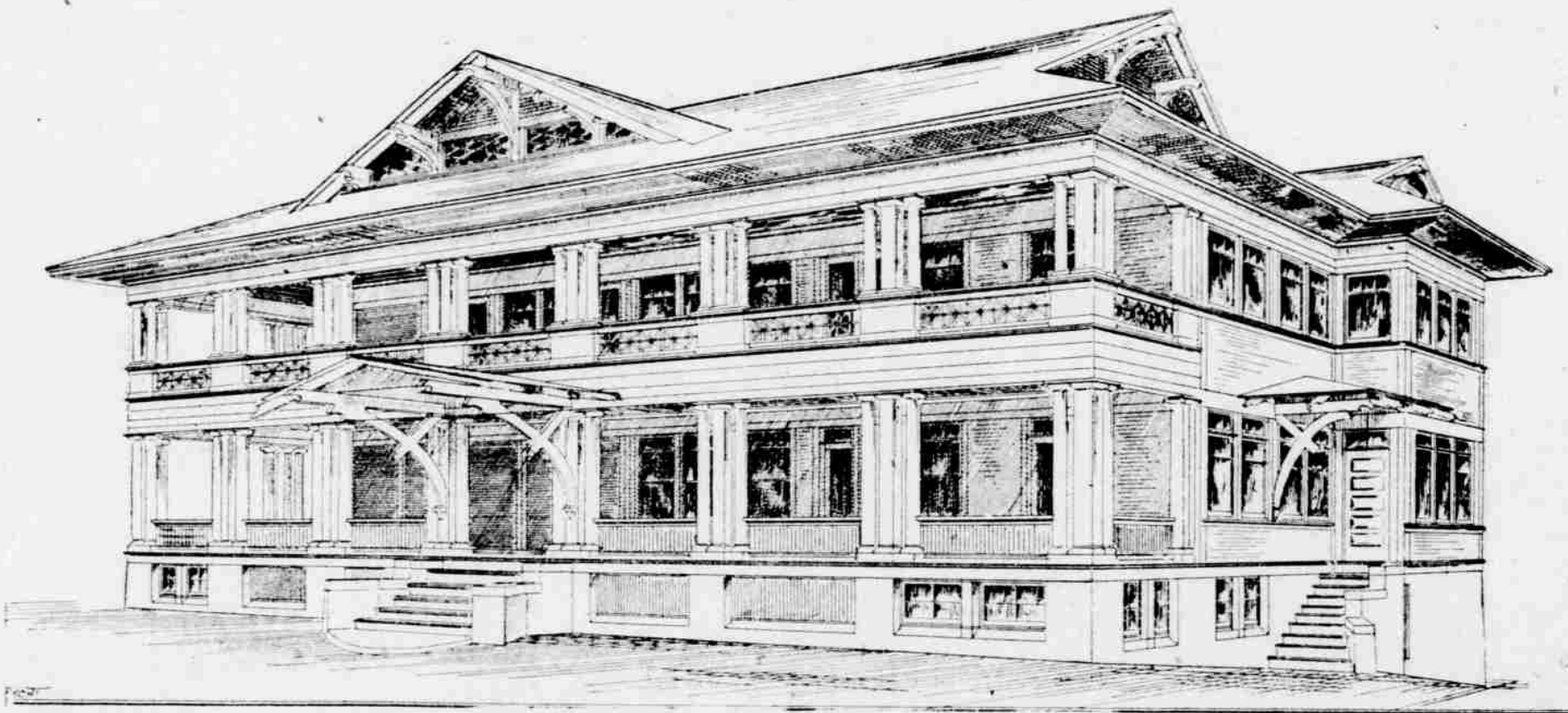
may be spirited away to the Isle of Sorrows, should she reveal her affliction. It is a simple ailment that a little care and attention would quickly cure. By and by a kind-faced woman will seek her out and see that she receives proper attention until her trouble is over.

On a dilapidated mattress in another room a child turns from side to side restlessly. His brow is fevered and a glance at his body shows only too plainly that he is suffering from scarlet fever. His mother watches by his side and a couple of other children play at marbles on the floor. There is no medicine in the room, for the mother is very poor and the father is dead. To this room also will come a sweet-faced lady with healing in her touch and voice, and the little sufferer will soon be receiving the best of medical attention, while the mother will be supplied with clean clothes and other necessities.

The tenement dwellers are, with one exception, left severely alone. Theirs are dreary days and lurid nights. Drinking, cursing, gambling and fighting is the tale of the tenements, and occasionally a room is raided or the police are called to arrest a brutal wife-beater or some other breaker of the law. And the children witness it all, listen to the cursing, and stare at sights which would make adults blush, in open-mouthed wonder!

Those Who Care.

The one exception, mentioned above, are the workers of the Palama Settlement who go about among the slums and becoming aware of cases of unusual misery and suffering extend what practical help they are able to. That the Settlement has been a godsend to the district there is no denying. It has been responsible for setting many a young man's footsteps in the right path and has made thousands of self-reliant



THE PROPOSED PALAMA SETTLEMENT BUILDING.

community. The chapel was deeded to Central Union Church, which assumed responsibility for the work. The social conditions at the time the chapel was built were far different from what they are today. There were then no frame

An Eleemosynary Corporation.

July last saw the Settlement incorporated as an eleemosynary association, strictly unsectarian and independent of any church. According to the laws of the Settlement, the objects toward which the association intends to direct its efforts are, in general, all and every variety of eleemosynary work; in part, but not exclusively, instruction of the poor and ignorant in sanitary living, including the care of children; the making and using of wholesome food, general rules of cleanliness, nursing, care of the sick and general dispensary work, maintenance, care and leasing out of model dwellings and tenements; night school, kindergarten, gymnasium, healthful athletics and every variety of wholesome entertainment, with the end in view of affording recreation to those who may be more or less deprived thereof.

The officers for the present year are as follows: President, John R. Galt; vice-president, W. F. Dillingham; secretary, George P. Denison; treasurer, James A. Rath; auditor, Richard Livers.

The Work of Today.

The kindergarten, which has been maintained throughout the year by the Free Kindergarten and Children's Aid Association of Hawaii, is more largely attended than ever before, and one has only to be present at one of the classes to be convinced of the excellent work being done among the tots. Here may be seen Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Porto Rican, Russian, Hawaiian, Portuguese and children of several other nationalities doing those wonderful exercises which delighted our childhood's days.

The evening classes have reached their high-water mark this month, the

popularity. The Settlement has been responsible for developing a good deal of musical talent among the youth of the district.

Nursing the Sick.

The records of the nursing department speak plainly of the great benefit which this department is to the poor of the neighborhood. Scarlet fever, infected eyes, ulcerated legs, tuberculosis and the simpler pains and aches are all cared for by the Settlement nurses, and well and professionally cared for at that.

The work of supplying pure milk to babies has been carried on throughout the year. In spite of the good results, however, it was felt unwise to continue the supply of modified milk. It was found that mothers were coming to depend on the depot, and in consequence were not learning how to feed their babies. It was decided to supply the pure milk and teach home modification. This system was introduced last April, and appears to be working well.

The White Plague.

Two phases of the antituberculosis campaign are handled at the Settlement—the day camp and visiting nursing. The city has been divided into seven districts and a nurse placed in each district, the nurses working from a dispensary center. In this way it is hoped that not only tuberculosis, but other diseases also, will be discovered and effectually eradicated.

The day camp is situated on a piece of land between Asylum road and Banyan street. It is near the tenement section of the city, where tuberculosis is doing its deadliest work and where help is needed most. Patients arrive at the camp at eight o'clock in the morning

difficulty in renting the cottages, ten of which are used by families, while two are used as dormitories for young men, the six dormitory rooms previously having proved insufficient to meet the demand.

Up Against It!

The Settlement is up against it for space, and up against it badly. The present buildings are old and rotten and totally inadequate to meet existing needs which are ever becoming more imperative. The dispensary is a 10x12 room and the class rooms are nearly always overcrowded.

When Superintendent Rath went to the helm five years ago the mission consisted of one building on King street and the work of the mission reached about 150 people. Today about nine hundred come into touch with the settlement work every week, most of them regularly, and the number is increasing steadily.

The Future.

In order that the good work may go on and that no halt may have to be called great things in equipment and endowment are planned.

It is proposed to build a general administration hall which shall contain the dispensary, and provide the class and club rooms, library and office. It is also planned to convert the present chapel building into a reading and recreation room and to build a workers' cottage. An effort will also be made to purchase the land adjoining the settlement which will be used as a playground and for the erection of cottages. It is estimated that \$35,000 will be needed to effect these things.

The endowment scheme contemplates the purchase of cottages leased at present, with additions, and the purchase of a tenement adjoining the settlement. The rental from cottages and dormitories thus obtained would give the settlement an annual income of \$3600. The cost is estimated at \$40,000.

Ways and Means.

Seventy-five thousand dollars are therefore needed and of this amount \$7500 has already been promised by two individuals.

The Settlement has to rely on donations in large measure for its support, for the membership fees have, of course, to be kept very low. Boys pay from 50 cents to \$1.00 a year and girls the same. Educational classes are extra. No one is too young or too old to become a member of the Settlement and neither color, race nor creed are taken into account.

Last year \$4200 were contributed toward the support of the Settlement by people living in the Palama neighborhood.

So broad-minded a man is Mr. Rath that he encourages friendly bouts with the gloves in the gymnasium and he intends, as soon as he can see his way clear to do so, to install billiard and pool tables in the game room.

"If you want to keep a fellow off the streets and away from the saloons," says Rath, "you've got to make it an object to him to come to your place. And in this, as in a good many other things connected with settlement work Rath appears to be dead right."

In the near future a son of Hawaii, in the person of Spencer W. Bowen, an old Panahou boy, will arrive from Oberlin University to become associate head worker at the Settlement and to take charge of the work among the men and boys.



SOME OF THOSE THE PALAMA SETTLEMENT ASSISTS.

independent men and women, who, had they been left to themselves, would probably, in the great majority of cases, have amounted to less than nothing, and who are today good citizens.

"An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure," is the motto of the Palama Settlement and all its work is planned accordingly. Its policy is nonreligious and nonsectarian and none is too poor or too humble to be admitted to its clubs or to share its other privileges. Nor does the Settlement wait for the poor, needy, dispirited and unfortunate to come to its doors with their tales of misery and woe. Its workers go out into the highways and hedges, as did One or old, and bid them come in.

There are clothes for the naked, food for the starving, clubs for the young men and women and classes and kindergartens for the babies, and everywhere moves the spirit of brotherly love and of true Christian helpfulness.

The work of the Settlement has grown and grown until today it can, despite crying need, grow no more. The buildings and accommodations are taxed to the uttermost and still the cry goes up from the hot, ill-smelling tenements; "Help our babies. Help us." And the pitiful thing is that there can be no more help extended. The work of the Settlement up to date has increased to half as much again as was being done at the close of the last school year. This in itself is eloquent testimony to the great part which the Settlement is playing in ameliorating slum conditions in Palama.

The Earlier Work.

The Palama Settlement was founded in 1896, Palama Chapel being the gift of Mr. and Mrs. P. C. Jones to the com-

tenements, cottages standing where those now are, the people occupying them being Hawaiians, part Hawaiians and a sprinkling of haoles and Chinese.

The chapel was built for religious worship, but from the first the social side of the neighborhood was recognized and cared for. The work steadily grew until the epidemic of plague and fire of 1899-1900, when it was discontinued entirely for a while.

Upon the return of normal health conditions, Palama became a changed neighborhood. Tenements sprang up like mushrooms. Homestead lots were purchased or leased, and frame tenements erected, bringing with them new problems, which the mission tried to cope with.

In 1905 the supervision of the work was transferred from the Central Union Church to the board of the Hawaiian Evangelical Association, the church continuing to contribute toward the pastor's salary.

This was the year when J. A. Rath, the present superintendent, arrived from Springfield, Massachusetts, at the instance of Dr. Doremus Scudder and took charge of the work of the mission. Mr. Rath is a Britisher, having been born in India. He has been engaged in slum work for nearly twenty years—indeed, he has made it a life study. Broad-minded to a degree and wonderfully well versed in all pertaining to human nature, Mr. Rath has achieved remarkable results among the "submerged tenth" wherever he has labored among them.

When Rath took hold, many of the old clubs and classes were revived and others organized. Gradually various activities were introduced and maintained, and in order to meet the needs of the growing work additional buildings had to be leased.

Unprecedented Growth.

In 1906 the name of the institution was changed from "Palama Chapel" to "Palama Settlement." It had grown so considerably that the old name was no longer indicative of the larger work being done.

To meet a crying need a trained nurse was engaged. Then others had to be added, and in 1908 the nursing work was thoroughly organized. At present nine nurses are employed and six dispensaries maintained and operated in different parts of the city. Pure milk depots were also established to help the nurses in their work among the babies.

In March, 1909, the Hawaiian board transferred the supervision of the work to a committee composed of the following: J. B. Galt, A. Galtley, A. L. Castle, W. F. Dillingham, W. W. Hall, Dr. W. D. Baldwin and Dr. Doremus Scudder. As soon as this step was taken the Settlement experienced an unprecedented growth.

In April of this year a tuberculosis day camp was opened and has already done excellent work.



LITTLE SISTER OF THE POOR.

total enrollment being close on to three hundred. Instruction is given in English, grammar, geography, history and arithmetic.

The girls have a sewing class, which is well attended and which has been of help to many who are now earning an honest livelihood with their needles. There are also dressmaking classes and a model housekeeping class, where girls learn practical housekeeping in a cottage, all the way from sweeping a floor to cooking a dinner.

There are also classes in music, and the Settlement orchestra has interested many young people of the neighborhood.

Body Building.

The new gymnasium building has been an added attraction to the boys and young men of the neighborhood. The recent enrollment was much larger than heretofore, and the interest manifested in the work of the club has been very encouraging. The program for the year includes indoor gymnasium contests, swimming races, indoor baseball series, track and field events and an outing to the Punahele. The gymnasium is well equipped with modern apparatus, including swimming tank, bowling alley and indoor baseball diamond.

Three gymnasium clubs among the women and girls are maintained, and all three show a steadily increasing enrollment and interest.

The Social Side.

The library and reading-room cater in part to the social side of Settlement life. The library, which is open but one afternoon a week, has been better patronized of late than ever before. The books are not, however, of a very extensive variety, and there is need of suitable additions to this part of the work. A variety of games are played in connection with the reading-room.

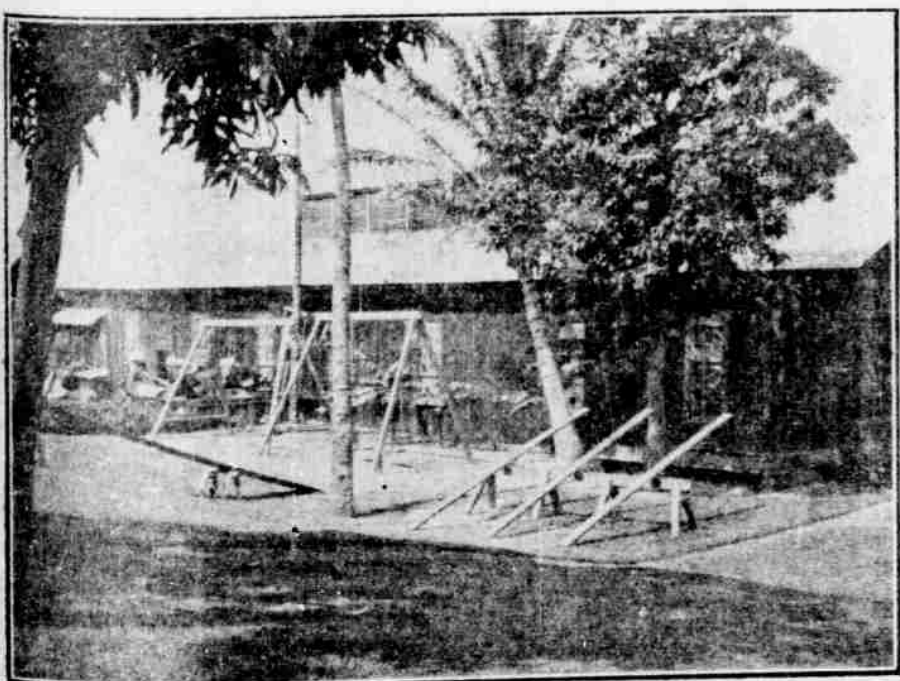
Entertainments are held regularly, and the attendance testifies to their

and leave at five o'clock in the afternoon. A trained nurse is in attendance at the camp.

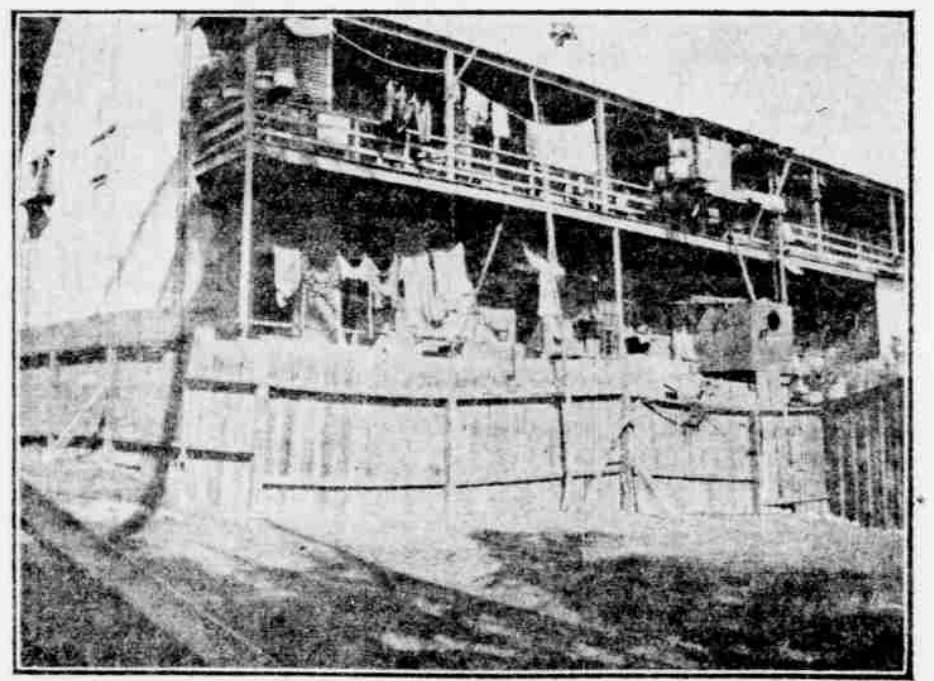
An employment bureau is maintained in connection with the Settlement, which found work for many during the past year.

Cottages and Dormitories.

Sixteen cottages adjoining the Settlement and formerly tenanted by an undesirable class of people have been leased from the Hawaiian Land and Improvement Company. These cottages were at one time a menace to the health and morals of the community. They were taken over by the company mentioned above, and after being renovated and made sanitary were leased to the Settlement. There has never been any



OPENAIR PLAYGROUNDS.



TYPICAL HONOLULU TENEMENT.